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lifted most of its ban on General Electric as a bidder on defense contracts. The ban was imposed last month after GE was indicted on charges of submitting phony bills.

The Air Force says the company has agreed to strengthen its accounting policies to prevent further improprieties.

\* BROKAW: John Chancellor is here with his commentary now. And tonight he's discussing the President's controversial plan to help the Contras.

JOHN CHANCELLOR: In the big-money world of Washington, rarely has so little been opposed by so many. The President wants only \$14 million for the Contra rebels who are fighting the government of Nicaragua, but he has stirred up massive opposition to military aid, which includes Pope John Paul II, the American Catholic Church, the Presidents of Costa Rica and Colombia, a probable majority of the House of Representatives, and a large number of senators.

A lot of people, including many who don't like the Nicaraguan government, think it is wrong to pay money for a nasty little war which our side cannot win. General Paul F. Gorman, who headed American forces in Central America, has said that the Contras aren't strong enough to overthrow the Sandinistas in the foreseeable future.

There is talk of humanitarian aid instead of military aid. And that's how the compromise may come out. But free food and medicine might enable the Contras to keep on fighting. And that seems to be the hub of the problem.

Continuing aid to the Contras would mean continuing American involvement in a military campaign which has no

chance of victory. That would mean more deaths and more costs. No one knows where it would end. No one can say precisely what would accomplish, other than keeping pressure on the Sandinistas, which they've been able to handle so far.

Senator David Durenberger, who chairs the Intelligence Committee, says that if we're really serious about controlling the Sandinistas, we should get together with the other Central American countries, under the OAS Charter and the Rio Treaty, and start some collective action: cut trade and diplomatic ties, consider a naval blockade.

Getting together with your neighbors when you feel threatened is a good rule. Supporting rebels who can't win is a bad one. And that's why aid to the Contras has been in such trouble.

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ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT      ABC-TV  
7:00 P.M.                      APRIL 18

#### Nicaraguan Developments

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PETER JENNINGS: And now the debate about support for the anti-government forces in Nicaragua. President Reagan has been facing some unending opposition in Congress, and today he was giving some ground on his request for \$14 million in aid for the Contras.

On Capitol Hill, here's ABC's Brit Hume.

BRIT HUME: Secretary of State Shultz was sent to Capitol Hill today to try to help salvage a situation that looked increasingly bleak for the Administration. He tried to put the best face on it.

SECRETARY SHULTZ: I think

it is a outstanding example of the democratic process at work.

HUME: That's the kind of thing you say when you're looking for compromise, not when you think you're going to win.

Still, the President kept trying today, even urging the orbiting Utah Republican Senator Garn to get back in time for the Contra aid vote on Tuesday. Garn said he would.

SENATOR GARN: I'm well aware of the vote on the Nicaraguan aid on Tuesday night, and I'll be voting just the way you'd like me to when I get back.

HUME: But the President made clear in a speech later to editors and broadcasters that he was ready to compromise, although he didn't like being rushed.

PRESIDENT REAGAN: My feet aren't in concrete on this. Yes, there's leeway. We're flexible as to the details of this program. But how much time do you have? It's Thursday and they've said the vote must be Tuesday. I think it is -- I think it's immoral to demand that vote that quickly.

HUME: Immoral or not, House Speaker O'Neill made clear he was in no mood to postpone the vote.

REP. O'NEILL: Of course, there has to be a direct up-and-down vote on the President's measure. We hope that we can defeat it, and we think we have the votes.

HUME: Indeed, the Democratic-controlled House Rules Committee moved quickly this afternoon to clear the way for Tuesday's vote as scheduled.

Down at the White House, meanwhile, the shape of a compromise began to emerge after a series of meetings between the President and

Senate opponents. It would mean the Contras would get the \$14 million, but not for military purposes.

SEN. JAMES EXON: Some of us who are opposed to any military aid could vote for humanitarian aid for a specific period of time.

HUME: Congress just might buy that, but the rules apparently require a vote first on the money as military aid. It is a vote for which House liberals, beaten so often in the past by the President, can hardly wait.

JENNINGS: In the middle of this debate on Nicaragua comes a claim from U.S. Intelligence that at least a dozen Soviet military advisers are working with Nicaraguan troops. ABC's John McWethy says they're not reported to be involved in combat, but are providing technical and tactical help in some of the areas where the fighting is heavy.

McWethy has just been to one of those areas, and he reports tonight on the Sandinistas' controversial resettlement program.

JOHN MCWETHY: It is daybreak in a combat zone, Northern Nicaragua, on the border with Honduras. This is where what is being debated in Washington will have its greatest impact. These are the people, the peasants, or campesinos, who are caught in the middle.

Because of the war being waged by the pro-American guerrillas, called Contras, the government of Nicaragua has ordered tens of thousands of these peasants to leave their villages. They are loaded on to trucks and are hauled off to resettlement camps.

Nicaragua says the peasants and their children are brought here to protect them from the

Contras. Others say it is to prevent these farmers from helping the guerrillas and to provide free labor to work the valuable coffee plantations of this border region.

In either case, resettlement camps, like this one at El Escambray, which is just one mile from the Honduran border in the land of the Contras, accomplishes both ends. It is constantly under the watchful eye of a Nicaraguan army garrison and its Cuba advisers. They are in and out of camp all day.

Fifty-six families have been moved into this makeshift housing in the last two months. Though ABC had a Nicaraguan army escort, many in this refugee camp said quite openly that they were forced to move here against their will, that they supported neither side in the war, but just wanted to be left alone.

Guillermo Agucia (?), who has already lost one son in the fighting, was uprooted with his family from his isolated mountain farm. He was not allowed to bring his two mules, his cow, or his pigs, and presumes the government took them. He hates it here, but would not say that on camera.

Others who would talk on camera said they are content.

For many, this resettlement camp is providing better housing than they've ever had before, a clinic with a nurse, schools for their children, and food on the table.

There is little understanding of world politics here, plenty of criticism for both the Marxist government of Nicaragua and the Contras who want to overthrow it. But there is a special kind of feeling about the Yankee: respect and fear, a feeling that help from the U.S. would

be welcomed, but not the kind of help that brings more fighting, more killing into the lives of people who are already struggling just to survive.

JENNINGS: George Will joins us tonight with a commentary from Washington.

George, the President doesn't look like he's doing too well on this debate with the Congress. Have you got any advice for him?

GEORGE WILL: Yes, "Fight harder," Peter.

Less than three months into his second term, he's in danger of suffering a stunning loss to his credibility by refusing to go to the country on television to make his case for aid to the Contras. His aides are telling him he might lose. There are two answers to that: He might now. And second, there are things worse for a President than losing, and one of them is looking silly. And that's how the President is beginning to look.

He's saying Nicaragua is a threat to the stability of the hemisphere, and ultimately our national security. He says the cause of the Contras is just, indeed they're the moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers. Yet he will not use, evidently, his fundamental power. The only thing a President can do on his own is move the country, and by moving the country move Congress. He doesn't seem to want to do that.

Instead, he's negotiating ever more minute restrictions on this minute \$14 million of aid.

This isn't a compromise, it's a defeat for the President, and it's one that will have reverberations throughout his second term.

JENNINGS: George, thank you very much for joining us.